



**DECISION NOTICE for the Draft Environmental Assessment:  
Amelia Island Wildlife Management Area Agricultural Lease  
Region 7 Headquarters  
PO Box 1630, Miles City, MT 59301  
(406) 234-0900**

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:**

The proposed areas of action were cultivated prior to MFWP owning this property. For several years MFWP has utilized similar agricultural leases to help achieve the management goals of providing hunting opportunity for white-tailed deer and pheasants while maintaining wildlife populations and habitats on the property in a viable, healthy condition. MFWP has used these agricultural leases to establish share-crop agreements with local producers who assist with managing existing farm land on the WMA to provide food and cover for wildlife throughout their annual cycle.

Not all of the 40 acres of crop land will be in commercial production at a given time. Depending on the year and rotation cycle approximately 45 to 65% of the 40 acres will be in a marketable crop. A rotation between commercial crops and habitat plot will be followed for many of the agriculture fields. Habitat plots could consist of annual food/cover plots, perennial food/cover plots or a mix of grasses and forbs. The purpose of a grass/forb planting will be to create residual cover, beneficial to the reproductive cycle of pheasants and other wildlife. The specific type of commercial crop as well as the design of the habitat plot on the property will be approved by the area wildlife biologist prior to any cultivation.

The lessee will be required to utilize farming practices that increase the productivity of the land. These include fertilizing and conditioning the soil, treating of noxious weeds, and maintaining fields in good condition.

**ALTERNATIVE TO PROPOSED ACTION:**

Alternative A: No Action: Agricultural lease will not be renewed and agricultural lands will not be cultivated. This alternative would require MFWP to commit resources to manage weeds on 40 acres of previously cultivated fields. Wildlife would be negatively impacted by lack of wintering habitat and food resources.

Alternative B: Proposed Action: Continue agricultural production: Agricultural lease will be established on farm fields. Approximately 45 to 65% of the 40 acres of crop land will be in commercial production at a given time. Wildlife will benefit because high-quality wintering habitat and forage will be available. The lessee(s), MFWP and sportsmen will mutually benefit through the sharecrop agreement.

## PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS:

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of its proposed actions to the human and physical environments, evaluate those impacts through an interdisciplinary approach, including public input, and make a decision based on this information. FWP released a draft environmental assessment (EA) for public review of this proposal (Amelia Island Wildlife Management Area Agricultural Lease) on January 26, 2015 and accepted public comment until 5:00 P. M. on March 2, 2015.

Legal notice of the proposal and availability of the draft EA was published in the *Miles City Star* and the *Forsyth Independent Press*. Copies of the environmental assessment were distributed to neighboring landowners and interested individuals, groups, and agencies to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. The EA was available for public review on FWP's web site (<http://fwp.mt.gov/>, "Recent Public Notices" and "Submit Public Comments"). An FWP statewide news release was issued and posted on FWP's website (<http://fwp.mt.gov/>, "News Releases").

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

## RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

## DECISION NOTICE

Utilizing the EA and public comment, a decision must be rendered by MFWP which addresses the concerns and issues identified for this proposed action.

MFWP's analysis supports the agricultural lease of the Amelia Island WMA as proposed. I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

**After review of this proposal, it is my decision to accept the draft EA as supplemented by this Decision Notice as final, and to recommend the continuation of the agricultural lease for Amelia Island WMA.**

The Final EA may be viewed on MFWP's Internet website: <http://www.fwp.mt.gov> or be obtained upon request from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 7 Headquarters, P.O. Box 1630, Miles City, Mt. 59301 (406) 234-0900.



Brad R. Schmitz  
R7 Regional Supervisor

March 9, 2015

Date